

YELLOWSTONE MASTER GARDENER NEWSLETTER



Volume I Issue 5

May 2012

Current Volunteer Opportunities:*

Ext. Office Phone, etc.
 Metra Sq. Ft. Garden
 Farmers Market Info. Booth
 C.A.R.E. After School Program
 Special K Ranch
 Courthouse Planter
 Salvation Army/Vista
 Fair Judge
 Home on the Range Garden
 Moss Mansion
 Zoo MT/Geranium Fest
 New Visions/Passages
 Annual Flower Show
 Meadowlark House
 Women's Prison Garden
 Friendship House
 St. Andrew's Com. Garden

*Please contact Amy Grandpre to see who is the current contact for these projects.

agrandpre@co.yellowstone.mt.gov
 Or call her at: 406.256.2821

Contact Information:

Yellowstone Master Gardeners
 P.O. Box 35021
 Billings, MT 59107

Send your submissions for newsletter to ymastergardener@gmail.com by the 15th of the month for submission in following month's edition

Editors:

- ◆ Ann Guthals
- ◆ Bob Wicks
- ◆ Elaine Allard
- ◆ Marcella Manuel
- ◆ Mary McLane
- ◆ Sharon Wetsch
- ◆ Sheri Kisch
- ◆ Tracy L. Livingston

Merita Murdock *by Bob Wicks*



This month's Master Gardener is Merita Murdock. Mert has been a Master Gardener since 1994 when the first Master Gardener class was held. There were about 8 people in the class.

Mert grew up in a small farming town in Wisconsin with her mom, dad, brother and 3 sisters. She has also lived in Puerto Rico, Roundup, and Billings. When she was in Puerto Rico, her favorite thing to grow was bananas, her favorite being the Finger Banana. I learned from her that there are almost as many varieties of bananas as there are apples. In Puerto Rico, Mert worked for the Veterans Administration for 2 years. Mert was with the Post Office here in Billings holding a variety of positions for 23 years. She retired from government work 3 years ago. She now has a couple of part time jobs. Mert also volunteers with VITA (Volunteer Income Tax

Assistance) through United Way, a free tax preparer organization for people making less than \$50,000. I know firsthand that she makes great homemade caramels which she plans to soon turn into a business.

Her passion in gardening is to be as organic as possible and to water as wisely and efficiently as she can. One of Mert's cool hobbies is taking pictures of wildflowers, but in reality that is just an excuse for her to get out in Mother Nature. In her Post Office job, she traveled Montana which gave her opportunities to scout for wildflowers. Mert also enjoys crocheting and, as she says, other "girl hobbies". Mert is married to artist Jeff Schaezle. She likes spending time with her friends, sisters, nieces and nephews.

Mert has volunteered in many areas of the Master Gardener program including flower shows, county fair judging, Metra garden, Yellowstone County Master Gardeners Association, and helping Amy in the extension office.

Mert is a huge asset to our program. Without her help the Yellowstone County Master Gardeners Association would not have been started as easily as it was. We can always count on her to make us smile with her sense of humor and outlook on life. Thanks, Mert, for all you do! Without you the Master Gardeners would be missing an important contributor.

MARK YOUR CALENDERS

May 5 –Cleanup Day @ Zoo

May 10 – Arbor Day @ Zoo

May 19—Geranium Fest @ Zoo



On March 26th, Master Gardeners and other volunteers joined together for a fun day at Zoo Montana and Botanical Park. They spent the day in the Sensory Garden cleaning, trimming and weeding to get the gardens ready for the spring flush of flowers. The weather was cool but that didn't stop them from getting most of the gardens looking shipshape just in time for the daffodils, primroses and miniature irises to put on their spring show. After the volunteers finished they had cookies and ice tea. (Thank you, Pat Morrison, for the cookies). The gardens continue to be a volunteer opportunity for Master Gardeners every Monday morning from 9:00 a.m. to whenever. Come join in the fun.

ASPARAGUS GRATIN

2 lbs thin asparagus	2 ½ cups water
salt and pepper	2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons flour	¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese	

Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat broiler. Line broiler-safe dish with paper towels. Trim hard ends of asparagus and reserve ends. Bring water to boil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add asparagus ends and ¼ teaspoon salt and cook, covered, for 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove asparagus ends and discard. Add asparagus stalks to skillet, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until nearly tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer asparagus to paper-lined baking dish. Pour asparagus water into liquid measuring cup; reserve 1 cup. Melt butter in now-empty skillet over medium heat. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly until golden, about 1 minute. Whisk in reserved asparagus water and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until thickened, 3 to 5 minutes. Off heat, whisk in ½ Parmesan and Monterey Jack until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Remove paper towels from baking dish. Drizzle sauce over center of asparagus and top with remaining Parmesan. Broil until cheese is golden and asparagus is tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Serve.

—submitted by Sheri Kisch

Helpful Hint

If you have a problem with weeds in and around the garden, thickly sow Buckwheat around the border. It chokes out most weeds, attracts bees to the garden and can be turned under for green manure. (Well, no one in Billings sells Buckwheat this year. Store the info for later). *By Sheri Kisch*

Johnny's Selected Seeds catalog has Buckwheat available (Item 966G). Contact Johnny's by phone at 1-877-564-6697 or visit their website www.johnnyseeds.com/ —by Ann Guthals

Onion-Peach Salsa

1/2 cup chopped yellow onion
2 cups chopped fresh ripe or thawed frozen peaches
3 tablespoons chopped cilantro leaves
2 tablespoons chopped jalapeño pepper
Fresh lime juice
Salt

Combine the first four ingredients in a medium bowl, adding salt and lime juice to taste; cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

This month's recipe is courtesy of the National Onion Association and Dixondale Farms. —submitted by Corry Mordeaux (He really likes his onions!)

May Checklist

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- Transfer warm season vegetable seedlings (tomatoes, peppers, egg-plants) to the cold frame to harden them up for planting the 15th. (Be sure to raise the top during the day to keep the temperature down and check for moisture needs often.)
- Continue planting hardened cool season transplants (rutabagas, collards, kale, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, turnip, and broccoli). **Be prepared to protect from killing frosts.**
- Make a succession planting of lettuce and chard.
- Increase vegetable pollination in the garden by planting carnations or Sweet William to attract bees.
- Mow grass to a height of 2" to shade out weeds and grow a dense lawn. Mow before grass gets too tall so that you are removing no more than 1/3 of the lawns total length.
- Start hardening up annual transplants the first part of May so that they will be ready to be planted the 15th.
- Pinch tips of leggy annuals to induce bushiness.

For a more complete list of May gardening activities –go to Grapevine on Yellowstone County Master Gardener's web site
www.co.yellowstone.mt.gov/extension/horticulture/

May Birthdays

12 – Roberta Olson
13 – Steve Shandera
17 – Corry Mordeaux
29 – Elaine Allard

The flowers of tomorrow are the seeds of today.

Yellowstone Master Gardener Association

by Ann Guthals

The new Yellowstone County Master Gardener Association (YCMGA) was begun by a group of Master Gardeners who wished to receive grant funds and other monetary donations to improve our Master Gardener program. Realizing that we needed a nonprofit organization to make receipt of grants more feasible, the YCMGA was born early in 2012. Our main objective was to create a nonprofit organization for **raising funds** to support and enhance the Master Gardener programs in Yellowstone County. The Association also plans to supplement **educational efforts** for and community involvement by Master Gardeners and provide another forum for **ongoing connection** among the many Master Gardeners in Yellowstone County.

There have been many administrative tasks to complete to make the YCMGA a viable entity. The process is nearly complete and we now have a Board of Directors in place (Bob Wicks, Sharon Wetsch, Ann Guthals, Merita Murdock, Vikki Fosjord, JoAnn Glasser, Marion Grummett, Murray Lyda, and Corry Mordeaux), nonprofit status with the State of Montana, completed Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, a draft brochure about our Association, a logo, and an almost complete application for 501c3 status with the federal government. We are now poised to begin searching for grants. There is also the beginning of an enthusiastic effort to enhance the development of community gardens in Billings, with YCMGA Associates as the educators and catalysts.

Certified Master Gardeners may become Associates for annual dues of \$15. Students in the Master Gardener program may be Interns until they receive certification. For more information about being a YCMGA Associate and becoming involved in our efforts, please contact President Bob Wicks (bobwix@hotmail.com).



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Email: ymastergardener@gmail.com

<http://www.co.yellowstone.mt.gov/extension/horticulture/mastergard.asp>

Wanted
Wood Chipper
For Zoo –Contact
Joann Glasser (652-8734)

Save your 4”
round (or square)
plastic pots for Af-
ter School Pro-
gram - Mary
McLane. (669-3329)



Volunteers are priceless

Zoo Montana And Botanical Park To Host The Arbor Day Celebration

National Arbor Day is Friday, April 27th. To celebrate, the Billings Arboriculture Association along with Zoo Montana and Botanical Park, will be hosting a special work day on **Thursday ,May 10th** from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Activities planned will feature tree planting, tree pruning, tree doctoring and everything trees.

It will be a full day with lots of information and educational opportunities for the whole family. Master Gardeners are encouraged to join in the celebration.

Saturday ,May 5th will be a prep day for volunteers to help the Billings Arboriculture Association prepare for the event. Refreshments will be provided on both days for all the volunteers. For more information and times call Tom Sawyer at 252-1250.

-by Joann Glasser

Zoo Montana And Botanical Park Geranium Fest

by Sue Carter

Zoo Montana and Botanical Park will once again be hosting the Geranium Fest on **Saturday, May 19th** from 10:00 AM to 4 p.m. This is a fund raiser for the Zoo. **FREE ADMISSION FOR ALL!!!**

Master Gardeners and other volunteers come together to sell geraniums and many other varieties of plants from the Sensory Garden. There will be concessions and vendors selling garden related items. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Joann Glasser (652-8734) or Sue

Carter (628-6113). Also, you can help out by donating perennial plants for the sale. (They need to be potted and brought to the zoo on Friday, May 18th after 1:00.) We appreciate your help. Thank you!

